

Foreword: Figures for Forests

Christoph Hartebrodt · Kathryn Howard

Accepted: 24 October 2010 / Published online: 16 November 2010
© Steve Harrison, John Herbohn 2010

The need for figures supporting the criteria and indicators of sustainable forestry has been recognised by the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). These figures are not used as goals themselves, but as decision-support tools by those who discuss, argue and decide the conditions and measures to be taken in forest policy and in the management of forest enterprises and individual stands. Gathering, processing and communicating data in forestry has a very long tradition, at least in countries with a strong forest history and a high economic reliance on forestry. In Germany for example, records about forests and forest products can be found from medieval times. For centuries data collection focused on data related to the economic dimension, but during the last two to three decades, a broader set of figures have progressively become of public interest.

Determining which figures, processes and tools are needed to support decisions about sustainable forest management was the task of the inaugural two-day international workshop ‘Figures for Forests’ organised by the Baden-Württemberg Forest Research Institute in November 2008 and hosted by the IURFO Group 3.08.00 ‘Small-scale Forestry’ and the European Alliance of Private Forest owners (CEPF). The workshop brought together researchers to share their experience and discuss the current state of knowledge in this important area, including recent advances in various new approaches and techniques regarding data collection, processing and presentation.

The most relevant papers from the workshop are presented in this special issue of *Small Scale Forestry*, with reports about how figures are worked with in Vietnam, the Philippines, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Germany. It can be seen as a kaleidoscopic overview which allows—for the first time—an intensive and overarching insight into the most up-to-date findings in this area. The

C. Hartebrodt (✉) · K. Howard
Forest Research Institute, Freiburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
e-mail: Christoph.Hartebrodt@forst.bwl.de

scope of this special issue ranges from the history of data collection and the importance of its continuity, to new approaches to today's threats and challenges. Reports on the latter topics indicate that the work on figures for forests is far from finished. Rather, in an increasingly complex and globalized world issues like comparability, compatibility and harmonisation are upcoming topics, about which this issue can be seen as a starting point for further discussion and exchange of knowledge. A second workshop is already planned for 2011. Maybe as forestry professionals we do not need any more figures, but we definitively do need more discussion and expertise about existing figures. The papers are published with the idea to promote this exchange of knowledge.